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Fifty-second session

First Committee

14th Meeting

Tuesday, 4 November 1997, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 83 *(continued)*

Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee

Mr. García (Colombia): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on this agenda item.

It is now widely recognized that the First Committee should undergo a rationalization process in order to further facilitate disarmament as defined in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I), which called upon the First Committee to identify issues and areas that are appropriate for negotiations, undertake a periodic review of the status of such negotiations and submit proposals for new approaches to a wide range of disarmament issues. The Non-Aligned Movement is of the view that the call made by SSOD I to the First Committee retains its relevance and validity.

As far as the First Committee is concerned, it is clear that the rationalization and streamlining of its work has been an ongoing process characterized by both success and setbacks. The large number of items dealing with various aspects of disarmament is clear testimony to the sense of preoccupation and urgency with which Member States view questions relating to the reduction and elimination of armaments. As the recent past has shown, some of the items were new and in a way reflected new developments, while others — in fact, a majority — were recurrent ones; this reflects, in part, the non-implementation of previous General Assembly resolutions on some of those items. It is also to be recognized that a certain measure of reiteration of positions and procedures continues to be an impediment to a more meaningful outcome of the First Committee's deliberations.

In order to rationalize the work of the First Committee, it would be useful to consider issues as groups of items or clusters — for instance, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; conventional weapons; regional disarmament and security; transparency and confidence-building; outer space; reports of multilateral organs; disarmament machinery and institutional matters; international security; and related matters of disarmament and international security.

Other areas worthy of exploration are the useful device of clustering draft resolutions at their stage of consideration and merging the thematic debate with this; deferral of some issues if political developments warrant; and merging and consolidation of resolutions dealing with similar issues. Such rearrangement should aim at providing a clearer organization and presentation of issues to be considered by the Committee, without prejudging their substance.

Efforts should be made to present draft resolutions on each item well before they are discussed in the Committee. Sufficient time should be allowed for informal consultations. The First Committee may establish under its Vice-Chairmen one or more groups for informal consultations among interested delegations on various draft resolutions.

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Ms. Hand (Australia): In the Australian statement during the general debate, I made it clear that rationalization of the agenda and work of the First Committee is important to our delegation. We must do this to ensure that we give ourselves the time for thorough consideration of current issues of priority to the broad membership, while still allowing States to air their individual and regional concerns.

In that statement, the proposals we made were: putting the time now allocated to structured debate to better use — that is, using this time for discussion of specific resolutions or clusters of resolutions; reducing the number of resolutions, especially through merging similar ones and biennializing or triennializing resolutions; and imposing stricter criteria against calls for Secretary-General's reports. In our view, there are too many Secretary-General's reports which either contain no new developments or simply contain the views of one or two countries. A country should have its opinion circulated as a document under an item without its having to be turned into a Secretary-General's report.

We therefore welcome the stimulating series of questions that you, Sir, put to the Committee in your statement yesterday, and I can say that for my delegation, the answer to each is "Yes". That is easy to say, but we are also prepared to listen to further views and to work diligently and cooperatively with other Member States to come to agreement on and to put into practice all possible reforms.

Australia has no particular views at this stage on how the issues dealt with by the Committee should be reorganized thematically into a new agenda. We note the contributions made by Canada and the European Union, and we will be studying them.

With regard to the reduction, biennialization or merger of resolutions, we can only endorse the observations already made. We heartily welcome the initiatives that have been taken by a small number of delegations, both from the Western Group and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), to reduce the Committee's workload in this way. More can be done. All sponsors of resolutions should take a conscientious approach and not treat this matter as simply a North-South issue.

We also agree that the Committee could reduce its work to four weeks. We are not using the meeting time allocated to us — some meetings are lasting less than an hour — and this is an unfortunate waste of United Nations resources.

To conclude, our delegation is prepared to work with others on this subject — both at this session of the First Committee and throughout the forthcoming year.

Mrs. Arce de Jeannet (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the views expressed by the Ambassador of Colombia on behalf of the delegations of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement on agenda item 83, "Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee".

Mexico shares the opinion that the Committee's working methods can be reviewed in order to identify measures that can lead to a more efficient way of dealing with our agenda items. From this standpoint, we find merit in the suggested merging of the structured debate with consideration of draft resolutions by clusters, which would result in a more transparent exercise for the conduct of negotiations.

We listened with great interest yesterday to the proposals made by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union and the delegations that associated themselves with that statement. In particular, we noted the opinion that the agenda of the First Committee must not become a political issue.

We regard the establishment of the agenda of the First Committee as a substantive issue of prime importance. Our positions on the items which should be considered and the order of their consideration are the result of decisions that reflect the stance of States regarding disarmament and security.

We have already said that any change in the disarmament agenda will have to be made in the light of the results of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We do not believe that it is productive to try to revise the agenda without general agreement on the disarmament objectives and programme. In the meantime, the priorities in this field are those agreed by consensus at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978.

In accordance with the general understanding that we shall limit ourselves to a review of our procedures, we would like to draw the Committee's attention to the communication sent by the President of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Disarmament to

the Chairman of the First Committee. That letter indicates that, contrary to the practice in past years, on this occasion the non-governmental organizations have not had access to the general debate or the structured debate. We are in favour of broad participation by the non-governmental organizations, which aid the cause of disarmament and help publicize the efforts of the international community in this field.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Colombia on behalf of the non-aligned countries.

In our intervention in the Committee's general debate, my delegation said it was ready to consider any proposal to improve the working methods of our Committee. We would therefore like to make our contribution to the debate on agenda item 83, dealing with the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee.

My delegation wishes at the outset to stress that, thanks to the rationalization undertaken several years ago, there has indeed been progress, even if it does not meet our hopes and even if we must continue our efforts to achieve better results. Here, we think that proposals, especially those made yesterday, as interesting and attractive as they might be, should be given careful study.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its view that the First Committee must continue to focus its attention on the disarmament and international security items on its agenda.

With respect to the general debate, my delegation believes that the existing formula has been satisfactory and has enabled all delegations to express their views on disarmament and security matters. My delegation would therefore want to retain its current duration, while wishing to return to the previous practice of holding meetings morning and afternoon until the list of speakers is exhausted.

On the thematic debate, my delegation is disinclined to speak of failure. Indeed, the results might seem modest compared with our expectations — and it is by those results that we must judge the exercise. Yet we should not completely reject the experiment, but should rather review the ideas behind it. While my delegation remains flexible on this matter, the most important thing, in our view, would be to use the time allocated for thematic debate for "informal formal" consultations on draft resolutions, chaired by a Vice-Chairman chosen by the Chairman. This has been done in other committees and has been quite successful. This would make it possible to adopt more draft resolutions by consensus, and would at the least bring closer together the positions of delegations on many issues.

Moreover, the timely introduction of draft resolution would have the merit of enabling delegations to study them early and to send them to their capitals. Even if preliminary texts are circulated before the draft resolution is officially submitted, the Secretariat would have the time to produce better translations: too often, last-minute submission — which is our responsibility — gives rise to rough translations or even to the omission of paragraphs.

To be sure, the excessive number of draft resolutions submitted each year is onerous and causes difficulties when there are more than 40 draft resolution to be translated and circulated in all six official languages; my delegation is fully aware of this. The submission of some draft resolutions every two years, and even every three years in some cases, could be a solution. But there must be agreement on a formula acceptable to all delegations, and the Committee must agree upon and accept the criteria that would determine whether a draft resolution was to be submitted annually, every two or every three years. Considerable reluctance and difficulty stand in the way of an agreement acceptable to all States and of acceptance that a given draft resolution might be considered only once every two or even three years. My delegation is somewhat reluctant to accept this proposal, not because of any dogmatism, but rather because it seems impractical in the light of current positions. But if broad agreement were to emerge, my delegation would join it.

On the other hand, the proposal for revising the agenda seems highly relevant and timely. My delegation considers that this proposal has many advantages and should be studied. At present the agenda contains scattered issues that need to be regrouped in such groupings as nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction, conventional disarmament and international security. Here, my delegation is prepared to join in efforts to that end, although we would find it difficult to accept the notion of adding items not related to existing agenda items. It would be equally difficult for us to agree to removing items now on the agenda and under consideration.

In any case, we consider that any reform or rationalization should improve the procedures for the functioning of the First Committee and not call into question matters that States accepted by consensus at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, whose Final Document, in our view, will

remain valid and relevant until a fourth special session — of which my delegation is in favour — decides otherwise.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): South Africa fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In a related context, I wish to note that we strongly support the Secretary-General's proposal that the work of the First Committee should be reviewed with a view to updating, rationalizing and streamlining it. To this end, we are of the view that the duration of the First Committee sessions could be considerably shortened without any impact on either the substance or the quantity of the work which is being done here.

The guiding principle in considering practical ways to update, rationalize and streamline the work of the First Committee should be the nature of the work undertaken by this body. The First Committee should identify the priorities of issues and areas for disarmament negotiations, review annually or periodically the negotiations in specific areas and make concrete proposals on new areas or approaches regarding non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control.

The resources, financial and otherwise, devoted by Member States to the work of this body should also be taken into account in order to permit the widest possible participation by all members, including by small countries in the developing world.

Possible steps in implementation of the statement by the Non-Aligned Movement and intended to enhance the effective operation of the First Committee could include, *inter alia*, consideration of First Committee draft resolutions according to their clusters, and merging the thematic debate with that consideration. This would allow delegations to express their views on the themes contained in each cluster and would obviate the need for a thematic debate as part of the Committee's programme of work.

Also, sponsors of draft resolutions should be encouraged to see whether it is necessary for each draft resolution to be considered annually. Draft resolutions which do not substantively change from year to year could be considered for biannual consideration on the principle that resolutions, once adopted by the General Assembly, remain applicable until again considered. Annual draft resolutions should include those where continuing developments need to be taken into account and those that are of such a nature that the General Assembly needs to be seized of the matter on an annual basis. Consideration should also be given to ways and means to shorten the time allocated for the First Committee general debate. Finally, meetings should be scheduled for both mornings and afternoons.

The First Committee session could effectively be shortened to four weeks while still allowing sufficient time for discussion of the various themes under each cluster of draft resolutions. While one of the purposes of the Secretary-General's reform proposals is to make the United Nations more economical, it should be remembered too that it costs States considerable amounts of money to send delegations to First Committee sessions and to keep them here for lengthy periods of time. This could have the effect of limiting the participation of States in the field of disarmament and international security. Widespread participation to deal with the real issues that are daily contributing to the largest number of deaths as a direct result of weapons — for example, small arms, light weapons and landmines — is in our view essential.

The restructuring of the First Committee, by, *inter alia*, shortening the duration of sessions, might attract more individual experts from capitals to attend meetings, which would heighten the input from all United Nations Members significantly. This is an important issue, as the Conference on Disarmament, whose membership is restricted and which is also in need of reform and democratization, does not allow for the participation of the full United Nations membership. Many non-members of the Conference on Disarmament only have recourse to participate in the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission.

In closing, I assure you, Sir, of the South African delegation's full support and cooperation in your efforts to find general agreement on ways to rationalize and streamline the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. We wish to encourage you to continue your consultations in this regard with a view to reaching agreement on this matter during this session.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): First of all, let me say that my delegation associates itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. The need for such rationalization and reform has long been self-evident, and this has been an ongoing process for quite some time. Concerted efforts have been made in the past by the Bureau in cooperation with Member States, but with mixed results. This calls for sustained endeavours for a more rational

structure than the present one, and for certain procedures to be recast with a view to revitalizing the work of the Committee. My delegation is also of the view that, as stated by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Committee might wish to promote such a step of rationalization by considering for the structured debate various issues as groups of items, or clusters, and the respective resolutions under those groups of items. Accordingly, my delegation considers that they should be identified roughly in nine clusters.

Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction would include nuclear issues, especially nuclear disarmament; bilateral nuclear arms negotiations; the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons; a ban on fissile materials for weapons purposes; non-proliferation; and nuclear-weapon-free zones and other related issues. Likewise, the conventional weapons category could include reductions of armed forces and military budgets, arms transfers and armaments of all types and degrees.

As to the agenda of the Committee, my delegation is of the view that the present agenda items reflect the reality of the current political and security constellations and thus remain relevant. The validity of a regional approach to disarmament and security has been widely recognized and has long been a recurring approach. Transparency and confidence-building would include objective information on military matters, the Register of Conventional Arms and questions of adherence to non-proliferation and disarmament agreements.

Outer space would include the prevention of an arms race in that environment and its use exclusively for peaceful purposes. The reports of the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, as well as other reports such as the one proposed by the Secretary-General, would fall under the rubric of reports of multilateral organs. Items such as the Disarmament Information Programme, Disarmament Week, the programme of fellowships, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and the status of multilateral disarmament agreements would come under disarmament machinery and institutional matters. The question of international security, especially the security of the vast majority of non-nuclear-weapon States, has always been an important agenda item of the First Committee.

Finally, the proposed cluster also identifies related matters of disarmament and international security in view of the importance of parallelism and coordination among them. Other areas worthy of consideration would be the mergers of resolutions whenever political developments offer an opportunity to do so. Even if they are described from different perspectives, a merger might still be possible. The deferral of some issues also warrants our consideration. Concurrently, the submission of draft resolutions well in advance of their consideration will expedite the work of the Committee. New methods such as informal consultations among groups of countries under the guidance of a Vice-Chairman on various draft resolutions could also be adopted by the Committee.

The approach outlined in the statement by the representative of Colombia reflects comprehensively the responsibility of the First Committee. It does not imply, however, that streamlining and rationalization is the only path to revitalizing the First Committee, but that they constitute an essential prerequisite.

Mr. Rao (India): We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. I take the floor to comment briefly on suggestions made yesterday with regard to the rearrangement of the agenda of the Committee.

As stated by Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, any rearrangement of the agenda should aim at providing a clearer organization and presentation of issues without prejudging their substance. The suggestions made yesterday on the rearrangement of the agenda have, in our view, the effect of prejudging that substance. We cannot allow nuclear disarmament to be taken off the agenda. Any attempt to impose a particular approach on nuclear issues through a rearrangement of the agenda items would in our view not be helpful.

The priority assigned to nuclear disarmament in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly continues to remain valid and is of central importance. The inclusion or exclusion of agenda items from the agenda of a particular session of the General Assembly emanates from specific General Assembly resolutions through an established process. Any rearrangement exercise, therefore, should not affect the process and the substantive issues involved. As stated by Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the aim of such an exercise should be a clearer organization and presentation of issues without prejudging their substance.

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): I should like to associate my delegation with the views expressed by the Australian delegation this morning. These strike us as being sensible and constructive.

My delegation will study carefully the proposals of others, including those of the European Union, suggestions offered by Canada, comments from South Africa and the statement this morning from the Non-Aligned Movement. My delegation believes that there is clearly a need for reform and rationalization of this Committee, and we are ready to work closely with others in addressing the issue and in moving it forward.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): According to one sort of logic, there should be a question about the very existence of anything that requires rationalization. But perhaps that sort of logic would put many bureaucracies at grave risk.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Colombia, the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, with regard to an approach to the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. I would only add that we perhaps require greater clarity about the purposes and objectives which the First Committee seeks to fulfil. In my earlier intervention, with regard to the thematic debate on the United Nations machinery, my delegation sought to identify the four possible objectives which the First Committee could fulfil, but I will not repeat those. They are, in any case, partially reflected in the non-aligned paper.

It is clear to us that the general debate continues to serve both a functional and a political objective in the First Committee and therefore should be preserved in future. Perhaps the length of the general debate, which is two weeks, is what is required. However, we believe that, concerning the draft resolutions which are submitted each year — between 45 and 50 draft resolutions — all delegations ought to face a sort of deadline, perhaps by the end of the first week of the general debate, for circulating their draft resolutions in initial form.

The delay in the draft resolutions arises from the preoccupation of delegations to obtain the largest possible cosponsorship for their draft. Perhaps these drafts could be submitted to the Secretariat in the understanding that, initially, they will be issued only in the blue form — or what used to be the blue form — that is not translated. It would be only once the delegation is satisfied with the number of sponsors or the amendments or revisions that it had to make to that draft that the final shape of the draft in all the languages could be issued. This would serve two purposes. First, it would enhance the possibilities of consultations; secondly, it would enable the Secretariat to process the draft resolutions in a staggered way, so that the burden does not fall upon it at the last minute, once the deadline comes down.

Thirdly, the thematic debate has not proved to be too useful without a focus. We agree with the sentiments expressed hereby both the Non-Aligned Movement and the European Union, as well as by others, that the time for the thematic debate could be more usefully spent in discussing the draft resolutions which would already have been submitted in the first week. The discussion could be in clusters around the same themes on the actual draft resolutions which are on the table. This would make the discussions — the thematic discussions, if you will — focused on the draft resolutions and therefore much more meaningful in terms of the exchanges that could take place between delegations.

Fourthly, on the agenda, my delegation agrees with the delegation of Mexico that the agenda reflects decisions taken by the General Assembly and inter-governmental organizations and that it would therefore be difficult to revise or prune the agenda in an arbitrary way. Some rec'ustering or reordering of the items into groups, as suggested in part by the European Union and by the non-aligned paper, could be possible, but their elimination might be difficult.

Fifthly, with regard to the frequency of resolutions, this is a matter on which we believe that the General Assembly cannot legislate. It is a matter for self-restraint by the delegations concerned and no one should be able to impose on the sovereign right of a delegation to submit or resubmit a draft resolution if it thinks so fit. In any case, in the case of certain resolutions, there would be a political message if that resolution were not submitted at any given session — for example, if Pakistan were not to submit its resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia.

Sixthly, with regard to the reclustering or renumbering of the items, we find that the paper circulated yesterday by the European Union is a useful one. There are some contradictions inherent in the listings, but these could be sorted out and it could be useful to attempt that exercise.

The non-aligned paper has one additional idea which is not reflected in the European Union's proposals. This is the proposal for informal consultations among delegations. My delegation feels that the First Committee ought to make a much greater effort than it does at present in order to evolve consensus on all its resolutions, if possible. We should, in principle, adopt the practice that is followed by the Second Committee, which is that structured informal

consultations are held on various draft resolutions under the chairmanship of the Vice-Chairmen of the Second Committee. That is a practice that should commend itself to the First Committee if we wish to reach broader agreement on the various items and issues that are presented for decision in this Committee.

Also as a matter of principle, my delegation feels that the First Committee should avoid duplication of resolutions or the adoption of similar or parallel resolutions which are not very different in substance. This practice would perhaps reduce the number of resolutions by 5 to 10 per cent.

Finally, we continue to attach importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission and my delegation, for one, does not believe that this is a body which should be eliminated. But we could use the Disarmament Commission much more productively if we were to use it as a sort of steering committee for the work of the First Committee to tackle some important, topical or controversial issues on which recommendations and proposals could be submitted by the Disarmament Commission to the First Committee. For this purpose, perhaps we should explore the possibility of holding the session of the Disarmament Commission somewhat closer to the session of the First Committee.

In closing, let me comment on the statement of my colleague from the European Union, who cautioned us to refrain from trespassing on the proper domain of the General Assembly and of the Secretary-General's proposals with regard to reform of the United Nations Secretariat. Having, in an earlier incarnation, served as a representative to the European Union, I am fully aware of the necessity for political correctness in jurisdictional matters. I would, however, add that procedure and process should not become an avenue to change the substantive political decisions and directions of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. And my delegation, for one, notes with appreciation that the document containing the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/51/6/Rev.1) states in its first paragraph:

> "Its objectives and strategies are derived from the policy orientation and goals set by the intergovernmental organs."

The budget document also states clearly that the Secretariat's mandate derives from the Charter and the aims and purposes set by the General Assembly, and is guided by the priorities established in relevant General Assembly resolutions and decisions.

It is for this reason that we feel that our debate on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee and our earlier thematic discussion on the United Nations machinery are important and relevant for the direction and orientation of our Organization and the support which we Member States should and do expect from the Secretariat in order to facilitate the formulation and adoption of our decisions and the implementation of those decisions. We are confident that the Secretary-General and the Secretariat are continuing to act in conformity with these legislative decisions and actions by Member States.

Mr. Sha Zukang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Regarding the question of the rationalization of the work of the First Committee, the Chinese delegation believes that the First Committee is the most representative organ dealing with questions of arms control, disarmament and international security. Its role and efficiency should be enhanced and strengthened. Rationalization of its work is one way to achieve this. The Chinese delegation fully supports the comments made by the Non-Aligned Movement.

There has already been lengthy discussion of rationalizing the work of the First Committee. Since 1984 we have conducted discussions on this issue, and in recent years we have adopted some measures. We can say that through the efforts of all sides successes have been achieved and progress has been made in the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. Overall its work is today rationalized; it is not entirely irrational.

Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. One should say that the informal, "structured thematic debate" has played a certain role. It has enabled the First Committee's discussions to be more focused and specific, and Member States can have a more profound understanding of the positions of the various delegations on the important questions of international arms control and disarmament. If we make full and proper use of this mechanism, it can be productive.

At the same time, we also note that this arrangement has its negative effects. It overlaps the general debate and to some extent overlaps the discussion of draft resolutions. In approaching this question of the rationalization of the work of the First Committee, we believe we can still maintain this period of time for systematic discussion and can adopt ways to discuss the draft resolutions at the same time — that is, we can use the clustering method and conduct the thematic discussion in connection with the draft resolutions. In this way our discussions will be more

focused, our understanding of the differing positions of various delegations will be deepened and we can avoid the duplication I have just mentioned.

Of course, another question arises, because the authors of draft resolutions need time to consult on them. Experience has shown that such consultation is very necessary. If we were to discuss the draft resolutions immediately after the general debate, there would not be enough time, since some of the draft resolutions might not have been properly prepared. In this respect, we believe the approach proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement is particularly relevant.

On the question of the reform of the First Committee's agenda, I would point out that the existing agenda is the result of a great deal of discussion between delegations. Generally speaking, it has served us well, although different delegations may have different preferences for certain agenda items. Some delegations go so far as to maintain that some agenda items should be eliminated. The Chinese delegation also believes that some agenda items are unnecessary and should have been dropped long ago. I respect the feelings of other delegations, and shall not mention those agenda items specifically.

However, in line with the concerns expressed by other delegations, we believe that we do not, broadly speaking, need to rearrange the agenda items, by which I mean that we should not make drastic changes; we do not need major additions or deletions. We agree with the opinion expressed by the members of the Non-Aligned Movement that, to facilitate our discussions, some of the agenda items could be clustered.

We believe that disarmament and arms control are the responsibility of the States members of international treaty organizations and that the United Nations Secretariat is no substitute. While the work of the First Committee is being rationalized, the Secretariat should also be modified so that when the rationalization has been completed the Secretariat may, in accordance with the mandate given it by Member States, provide better services. Specifically, it should provide better logistic support to Member States.

It must be emphasized that a rationalized Secretariat should and could only conduct its work in accordance with the mandate given to it by the sovereign States; under no circumstances should it duplicate, let alone replace, the role of the sovereign State or Treaty organizations concerned. Any attempts to jeopardize the rights of sovereign States under the pretext of rationalizing and reforming the First Committee should be resolutely resisted.

These positions of the Chinese delegation are preliminary. We have listened carefully to the views expressed by the European Union, by you, our Chairman, and by other delegations on the rationalization of the Committee's work and reform of the agenda. The Chinese delegation will give careful study to those views and suggestions and will comment further in due course.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by the Ambassador of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The First Committee's working methods have improved in recent years. In this regard, the smaller number of draft resolutions, with more consensus on those adopted, as well as the merger of the debates on disarmament and security issues, are noteworthy. However, building on our past achievements, and especially on the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, much can be done to streamline the work of the Committee and make it more goal- oriented. In our view, this can be done through a further reduction in the number of agenda items and draft resolutions by merging similar items and draft resolutions, reclustering agenda items and merging the thematic debates with the consideration of draft resolutions.

On another subject, I should like to inform the First Committee that yesterday our Government deposited its instrument of ratification of the Weapons Convention with the United Nations Secretary-General. Beginning next month, we will be a party to that Convention.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.